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A PAIR OF BLACK-FIGURED LECYTHI IN THE WORCESTER MUSEUM

THE small collection of classical antiquities in the Worcester Art Museum has recently received an important addition in a pair of black-figured lecythi.

A (Fig. 1). Hermes Nomios driving a flock of sheep toward hill-pastures represented by a rock at the right. Branches in the field. Handle missing. No restorations.

B (Fig. 2). Two nude horsemen, carrying each a pair of spears and galloping to the right. Lip broken and mended in two places. No restorations.

Material: Deep red clay; black glaze, very lustrous except in figures and lower part of body. The handle shows brilliant greenish lustre of the best black-figured ware.

Decoration: On shoulder — above, rays; below, a series of inscribed palmettes set horizontally. On body — above, dots connected with zigzag strokes, between double parallel lines; below, meander between double parallels. At juncture of body and foot, band of red. Foot entirely black (the light band in the illustration is due to an incrustation not removed at time of photographing).

Dimensions:

	<i>A</i>	<i>B</i>
Height of whole vase,	0.161 m.	0.164 m.
Height from top to base of shoulder,	0.047 m.	0.043 m.
Height of foot,	0.008 m.	0.011 m.
Height of lip, including red fillet,	0.009 m.	0.008 m.
Height of picture space,	0.052 m.	0.054 m.
Diameter of shoulder,	0.072 m.	0.070 m.
Diameter of neck at smallest circumference,	0.018 m.	0.016 m.
Diameter of mouth,	0.038 m.	0.0345 m.
Diameter of foot,	0.040 m.	0.042 m.
Diameter of body at juncture with foot,	0.0165 m.	0.0175 m.

History: Purchased about forty years ago, from a private collection in Nice, by Miss Mary Bellows, and given in 1895 to the American Antiquarian Society of Worcester. From them, in 1910, purchased by the Worcester Art Museum.

These lecythi seem at first only good typical examples of a class common just before the change from black-figured to red-figured technique. They have the familiar proportions: a bowl wider in relation to its height than is the case with the later white lecythi, and tapering in a steady inward sweep from its greatest diameter at the shoulder to a slender foot. The draughtmanship, too, in the decorative parts, shows the exquisite accuracy of the best later black-figured work; while the figure-drawing has the masterly swiftness of touch and summarizing power of the happiest of the "Kleinmeister," or of Andokides or Epiktetos. Yet, on a closer acquaintance, they present certain traits of more than usual interest.

In the first place, the word "pair" is used advisedly, as a glance at the illustrations will show. For, apart from such slight variations in size and proportions as are inevitable in repeating a given form freehand, and from figure drawings which cannot be considered either in subject or composition as pendants, the two are identical in size, shape, and decoration. While this identity is not in itself striking (to mention only a single random example, there is a pair of very late black-figured lecythi in the Metropolitan Museum which vary as little as our vases), it is worthy of mention because many of the qualities which link our two vases serve to mark them off from other members of their class.

Their shape is, so far as I can tell from the originals within my reach or from the scanty published material, unique in two respects. For one thing, while all other lecythi of which illustrations are available show a clearly marked division between neck and shoulder, often (as in two instances in the Metropolitan Museum and at least two in the Louvre¹) emphasized by a slightly raised fillet, in ours the inward curve just below the mouth passes rapidly, but without a break, into a steady outward

¹ F 361 and F 188, both in Pottier, *Vases Antiques du Louvre*, II, pls. 86 and 77 respectively.



FIGURE 1.—BLACK-FIGURED LECYTHUS, 4, IN THE WORCESTER ART MUSEUM.

flare, so that there is no definite point at which the decoration of the shoulder might naturally begin. The nearest approach to the shape which I can mention is shown in Louvre F 71.¹ But even there, though the shoulder is steeper in slope and the neck more stubby than in developed examples, the point of juncture is clearly marked not only by a change in color, but by a raised fillet.

In the second place, the modelling of the lip and foot cannot be exactly paralleled. With the foot, which consists of a thin fillet resting on a delicately profiled, torus-like moulding, the difference is, perhaps, rather in execution than in type. The stepped bases of certain white lecythi may be considered a rude approximation to the form, though in almost all instances of which I know, the edge of the lower as well as of the upper step is vertical, and the proportions are not differentiated. In an example in the Metropolitan Museum, where the lower step does take the form of a curved moulding, the two divisions are more nearly equal in height than in the vases under consideration. The mouth, on the other hand, is a frankly individual type. In the lecythi with which I am familiar, the mouths fall into two classes: (*a*) the common type used for the white lecythi of the fifth century, a deep bell shape, flaring gradually, with height rarely less than two-thirds of its diameter; (*b*) a less shapely form, shallower and spreading abruptly from the neck. In both cases the whole member is usually black. In our vase the red clay neck itself, flaring outward and ending in a narrow vertical rim, forms a sort of socket. From this rises the lip proper, black as always, but relatively low and spreading. The whole is comparable, not only in the modelling of the lip itself, but also in the subtle suggestion of organic growth, to Doric columns of the late sixth century.

Another point in which the lecythi under consideration stand apart is the species of palmette that decorates the neck. A relatively narrow band of small palmettes, while in itself uncommon for a lecythus, is fairly familiar as a border on the crater, hydria or amphora form of the period of red-figured vases, and by no means rare in the later black-figured style. Of this particular form, however, — inscribed palmettes laid

¹ Pottier, *Vases Antiques*, etc., II, pl. 69.

horizontally and juxtaposed without connecting tendrils, — I have been able to find in a total of about three hundred vase drawings inspected only two other instances, both from the later part of the period when red-figured vases were made.¹

Such are the peculiarities which our vases possess in common: in shape, while the neck and shoulder approximate to a less developed stage, the foot and lip reveal an unusually

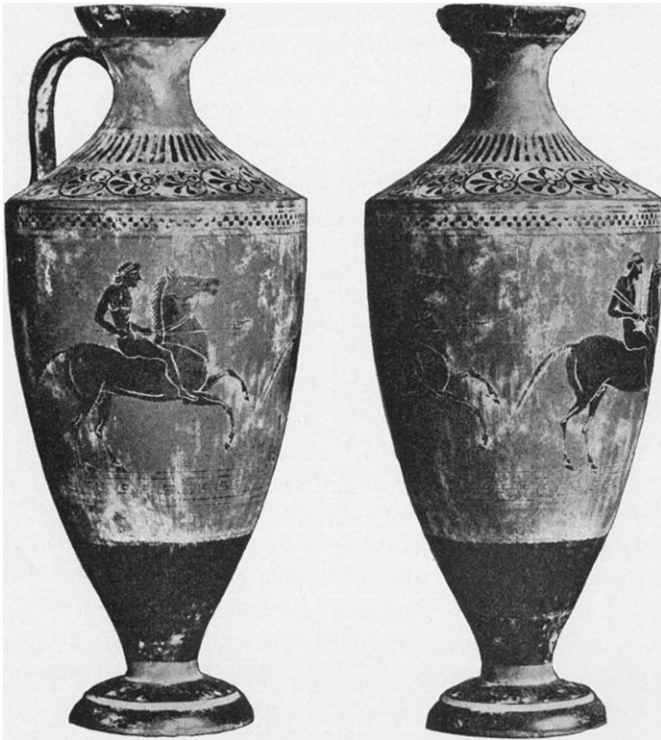


FIGURE 2. — BLACK-FIGURED LECYTHUS, *B*.

dainty, clean-cut articulation; in decoration, a form of palmette is employed which is rare on lecythi and not common on black-figured ware, a form, moreover, of which this particular species seems to be found only on late red-figured ware.

Considered separately, each presents a further point of inter-

¹ Crater in Arezzo, Furtwängler und Reichhold, pl. 61; and calpis once in the Canino collection, Gerhard, *A. V.* 28.

est in its pictorial representation. On *B* the figures themselves would be noteworthy only as types of the vividly conceived, nervous horses and riders of the late sixth century, were it not that they repeat, line for line, two horsemen out of a group of three on the shoulder of a black-figured hydria illustrated in Gerhard, *A.V.* pl. 35. The resemblance extends beyond the drawing of the single figures to the relative placing of the two. The instinctive suspicion of a forgery must give way before the evident genuineness of the piece,¹ so that we have here an instance of unusually close repetition of an atelier type.

A, on the other hand, with its representation of Hermes and his flock, claims attention for two reasons. In the first place, it may be unquestioningly identified with the vase published in Gerhard, *A.V.* pl. 19, as in the possession of Herr Klenze, of Munich, and which Reinach, in 1900, was unable to locate.² The form of vase there sketched has, it is true, the ordinary bell-shaped mouth and slender body of the early red-figured lecythi, the palmettes are omitted, and other decorative details loosely rendered; but the pictorial portion, while lax in quality, reproduces our composition detail for detail, even to the carelessly drawn object at the feet of Hermes (which may stand for a winged boot) or the clumsy kerykeion. The recovery of the vase ought to be of especial interest, as it appears to be the only published representation in vase-painting of Hermes Nomios.³

The conception of Hermes as the shepherd and patron of the flocks, whose origin is delightfully told in the Homeric hymn, had become so intimately inwrought with the god's personality that its representation in art had gradually condensed from narrative or picture to epithet and symbol. In place of the shepherd appears the "kriophoros"—the god with the ram on his shoulders or in his arms, or, at best, trotting beside him in some assembly of the Olympians, a faithful comrade like

¹ In its favor are not only the characteristic technique and the peculiarly Greek spirit of the drawing, but the fact that the glaze resists the action of alcohol.

² See the *Répertoire des Vases Peints*, vol. II, p. 25.

³ Roscher, *Ausführliches Lexikon*, etc., p. 2404.

Dionysus's panther or the hind of Artemis. But though Farnell¹ and Preller² both state vaguely that "the god may be represented driving his flocks," and Roscher gives a list of monuments in which he appears as shepherd,³ in every instance cited, of which I could find illustration or description, the flock is condensed into a single ram or goat grouped with his master as a conventional symbol. In one unpublished vase besides our own, a black-figured lecythus in the British Museum (B 549), the suggestion has begun to expand into a genuine pastoral. But even here, where the hill pastures are hinted at by the rock behind Hermes' couch and the tree that shades it, the flock is still reduced to a single goat. Only in the vase under consideration have we all the elements of the picture: the shepherd booted and cloaked, guiding with upraised hand the flock that surges along, rams and ewes together, in the confused tide that so often engulfs the wayfarer to-day on the lowland roads about Corinth or in the Attic plain; a mass whose outer edge already begins to break and scatter up the hill slopes. All is still condensed and suggestive, as it must be in true Hellenic art; the hills are a mere pillar of a man's height; the forest a pattern of conventionalized vines in the field. But the essentials of the scene are seized with a sure instinct: the tired, plodding gait of the shepherd, the hesitating recoil of the rearmost ewe, who feels that the flock has changed its course, but does not yet know whither; the forward lunge of the next group with its tangle of trotting legs; and, finally, the inquiring upreared head and clambering forefeet of the leader, who must find the hill path. Even the mountain, shorthand indication that it is, is right in its essential forms of crag, plateau, and talus-slope.

In this pastoral it is significant to note that the god has lost his commanding position as centre and become merely one of the elements of the scene, and not the most important one at that. Hastily drawn, dwarfed by his sheep, used to balance the rock as a bounding mass of the composition, it is evident that his divinity no longer awes or even interests the artist, but has become a mere mythical peg on which to suspend a charming "landscape with cattle." Such a pleasure in the

¹ *Cults of the Greek States*, V, p. 35.

² *Gr. Mythologie*, ed. 4, p. 420.

³ *Lex.*, s.v. 'Hermes,' p. 2378.

life of wood and hillside, for its own sake, has generally been considered an Hellenistic trait. Future study, however, may reveal a considerable class of late black-figured vases, which possess certain common traits in decoration and draughtsmanship, and whose subjects seem to have been chosen not for their mythological or even human interest, but simply with an eye to pictorial possibilities, a purpose proved by the use of trees, animals, and accessories as leading members in the composition. The publication of the present vases will be well worth while if it shall have its share in stimulating more sympathetic study of the conception of landscape in early Greek art.

ELIZABETH MANNING GARDINER.

WORCESTER ART MUSEUM,
WORCESTER, MASS.